
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The judiciary has completed a review of its efforts to ensure the optimal use of judicial resources. This study describes how the judiciary is taking action to carry out its mission cost effectively by streamlining operations, using technology, and ensuring resources are deployed appropriately and used efficiently.

For many years, the judiciary has been intensely focused on improving economy and efficiency. To facilitate these efforts, the Judicial Conference of the United States, the judiciary's policy-making body, three years ago created a special, permanent subcommittee of its Budget Committee. Supported by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and in conjunction with other committees of the Judicial Conference, the Economy Subcommittee's mission is to coordinate the judiciary's actions to improve fiscal responsibility, accountability, and efficiency. The appendix to this report provides a list of initiatives compiled by the Economy Subcommittee which identifies substantial savings to the federal government through the concerted cost-containment efforts of the judiciary family. The judiciary is committed to continuing and expanding these efforts to identify further savings and ways to improve the administration of justice.

Approved by the Judicial Conference, this report responds to Congress' request for a study on the optimal utilization of judicial resources. Specifically, the congressional Conference Report cited in the federal judiciary's fiscal year 1996 continuing resolution asked for a study by November 30, 1996, addressing four specific topics. In addition, the fiscal year 1997 House appropriations committee report asked that the study also address a fifth topic, specifically any other areas where improvements and cost efficiencies can be achieved. The five requested study areas and results are summarized below and described in detail in the report.

Distribution of Judicial Resources

- **The extent to which the current judicial workload corresponds to the distribution of judicial resources**

The staff resource planning and distribution systems of the judiciary ensure that staffing corresponds to workload. For court support staff, the judiciary measures the work performed in the courts and uses workload-driven formulas and sophisticated statistical forecasting to formulate budget requirements, and up-to-date workload information to distribute positions based on the workload in each court. For judgeships, the Judicial Conference applies workload-based criteria to determine requirements. For Article III and bankruptcy judgeships, the Judicial Conference makes recommendations to Congress, which ultimately decides the distribution of those positions. Chapter 1 provides a detailed analysis of the distribution of judiciary staff resources.

Space Costs

- **The extent to which under-utilized court facilities could be closed, or the sharing of courtroom space expanded, without appreciably affecting the delivery of justice, and the potential for savings in space costs that could be realized**

The judiciary is taking a number of steps to reduce courthouse space costs wherever this can be done without impeding the effective administration of justice. The Judicial Conference has adopted a comprehensive plan for enhancing space management and containing General Services Administration (GSA) rental costs. Initiatives underway include reducing the size of the current and projected space inventory by closing or downsizing visiting court facilities where appropriate, reexamining the amount of space to be occupied in future buildings, and consolidating existing space when possible. Also, the Judicial Conference is exploring the feasibility of courtroom sharing and will adopt an appropriate policy. In addition, the Judicial Conference Committee on Security, Space and Facilities is reviewing the judicial space standards compiled in the **U.S. Courts**

Design Guide. One aspect of this review is to emphasize proven cost-effective design strategies. Actions already taken will save over \$12.4 million in annual rent costs. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the judiciary's space management initiatives.

Contract Services

- **The extent to which the use of contract services might be substituted for non-judge employees in the courts and what, if any, savings could be realized**

The judiciary makes extensive use of non-judiciary employees to perform a wide variety of functions, such as photocopying, computer repair, production of jury wheels, temporary clerical work, drug testing, and expert consultant services. In fiscal year 1995 alone, the judiciary obligated approximately \$355 million for outside services. The appropriate use of contract services can save resources and often provides a more efficient way to deliver certain services. In addition to national contracts, the courts have been given the flexibility to obtain services by contract where it would be cost-effective. Possibilities for additional use of outside services are being explored, but new opportunities are limited because many judiciary functions simply cannot be appropriately performed by non-judiciary employees. Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of the judiciary's use of contractor services.

Automation and Technology

- **The extent to which savings and efficiencies can be realized through enhanced use of automation and other high technology initiatives**

The automated systems currently available to the courts rival those of any other similar federal entity and most private law firms. To expand on past ac-

complishments and take advantage of emerging information and communications technologies, the judiciary is pursuing several major initiatives with excellent potential to change and improve the processes by which business is conducted in the federal courts—for the courts themselves as well as for litigants and the public. The judiciary is exploring and testing the use of Internet and Intranet technologies, imaging technologies, electronic filing, electronic noticing, videoconferencing, computer-based training, mobile computing, and other technologies and applications. The judiciary's modern business approach to information technology development ensures that technological solutions to business needs are based on user requirements and are shown to be cost effective. Enhanced use of technology can improve the accessibility and accuracy of information, improve judge and staff productivity, enhance public access to court services and information, and facilitate more efficient disposition of cases. Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of the judiciary's forward-looking automation efforts.

Other Opportunities for Economy

■ The extent to which the judiciary is pursuing improvements and cost efficiencies in other areas

The judiciary has a broad array of programs and procedures in place to identify other areas where improvements and cost efficiencies can be achieved. The judiciary is examining and implementing numerous process, policy, and program improvements to reduce spending, ensure resources are not wasted, and improve efficiency. Individual courts are adapting to resource shortages through innovations that can be adopted by other courts. National efforts include a program to identify and communicate potentially better methods for carrying out work processes, and the examination of alternative ways of organizing staff resources for handling administrative functions. An extensive list of efficiency improvements the judiciary has either implemented in recent years, or is considering for future years, demonstrates a commitment to identifying ways to economize. Chapter 5 discusses in detail several major economy and efficiency efforts, and the Appendix provides a comprehensive summary.